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Middletown

and

The American Revolution

BY

ALBERT E. VAN DUSEN

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ALBERT E. VAN DUSEN

Assistant Professor

of History

The University of Connecticut

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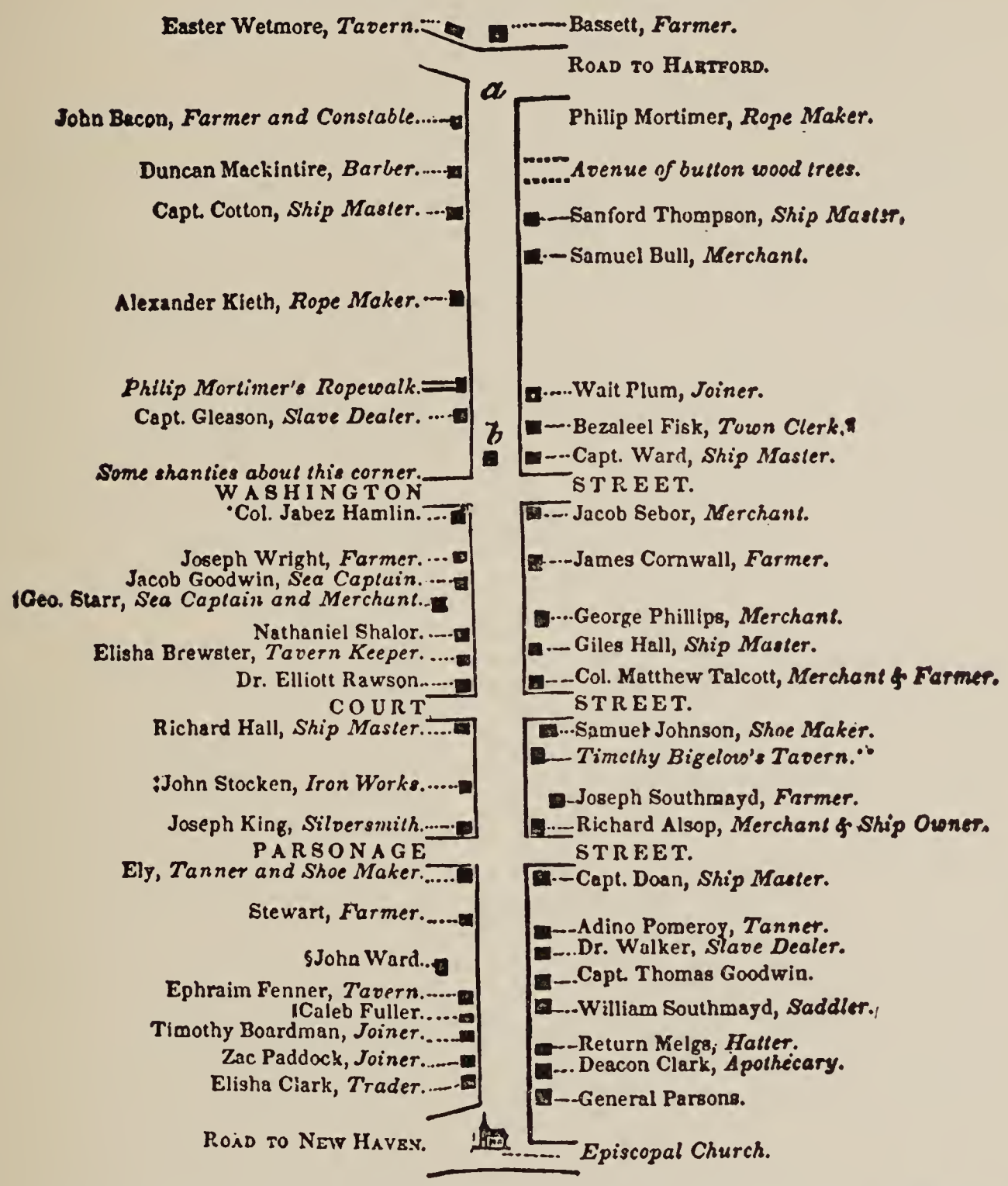
PLAN OF MAIN STREET, MIDDLETOWN, SHOWING THE BUILDINGS AND OCCUPANTS, FROM ABOUT 1770 TO 1775.

(By Joseph Barratt, M. D., Middletown, Sept. 1836.)



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* First mayor of the city, 1784. † Built by H. Brown, a hatter. ‡ Built by Giles Hall.
§ Built in 1678; afterwards occupied by Wensley Hobby, the first post master in the town: the post office was kept where he resided.
‖ Mr. Fuller was a schoolmaster, minister, constable, storekeeper, and kept tavern about 6 months.
¶ The office of town clerk of Middletown has been in this family 114 years.
** Gen. Washington put up at this tavern.
The letter *a*, at the head of Main street, shows the spot, or very near it, where the first meeting house was erected. *b*, town house.

(From Barber's *Historical Collections*, p. 508)

MIDDLETOWN
AND
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

ON THE three-hundredth anniversary of Middletown's founding, it seems appropriate to recall some of the more stirring years in the long history of the town. Perhaps no period of the three centuries possesses more intrinsic interest and special significance than that of the American Revolution, 1775-1783. In common with most of the large American towns, Middletown found its pattern of life severely jolted and shaken by the bitter fight for independence. Fortunately for the townspeople no "Redcoats" ever marched through the streets, but many citizens faced them on grim battlefields elsewhere.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVOLUTION

The American Revolution appeared to break out suddenly in the famous skirmishes at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. In reality the war came only after several decades of growing misunderstandings and tensions, as Connecticut, in common with her neighbors, exhibited occasional strong opposition to British policies. Passage of the Stamp Act of 1765 produced immediate reactions. Middletown greeted the news of the Act with energetic protest, as this account indicates.

Middletown, Nov. 2d, 1765

> Yesterday being the day prefixed to enslave America, by an unrighteous and oppressive ————, some of the principal gentlemen of this place, to shew the sense they had of their native liberty and freedom . . . met together, and agreed that the bell should toll all day with the tongue muffled; that minute guns should be discharged, and a pendant hoisted half-staff high, before the town house, which was accordingly done. All the vessels in the harbor had their pendants struck half-mast high. The gentlemen being met about noon, drank several loyal healths; and among the rest this was toasted — Liberty, property and no stamps — Confusion to all enemies of liberty, &c. In the evening, the young people dressed three images: two of them were dressed very grand; one in an arm chair, representing a late ignoble lord; the other, waiting on him, in a private conference, holding up a piece of parchment to him, with these words wrote in large characters, "*Let's inslave America with*

> *stamps.*" Behind them on the stage, was a most forlorn image, with a fierce countenance, representing the D—l, with a speared fork in his right hand, and a lanthorn in his left . . . . The whole scene was over about ten o'clock; when the said images were taken off the stage and treated with the ignominy their o—l deserved, then burnt, and their ashes were stamped into the earth. Not less than eight hundred joined in this affair; and, notwithstanding the number of all ranks, the whole was conducted and concluded with the utmost decency and good order. It would be amiss to omit, that our young children, that can hardly speak, have already learnt this lesson well — Liberty, Property and no Stamps — which they sing along the streets.[1]

Perhaps it would not be disrespectful to suggest that many of the young patriots obviously greatly enjoyed striking their "blows" against tyranny!

A lull in the imperial struggle came in the early 1770's. The town records for the period reveal preoccupation with local affairs. In 1773 came the Boston Tea Party to which the British answered with the Coercive or "Intolerable" Acts of 1774. With the arrival of General Gage and his regular troops, popular opinion in the New England Colonies began to mount to fever pitch.

On June 15, 1774, over five hundred citizens of Middletown met to protest the rigorous British measures. They solemnly resolved to support any steps taken by a general Congress or by the State. The meeting chose Richard Alsop, Titus Hosmer, and Matthew Talcott as the local committee of correspondence[2] — a pivotal body in keeping alive the spirit of opposition.

Even before the First Continental Congress met in the fall of 1774 public opinion in the town seems to have favored forthright action. When the Massachusetts delegates to the Congress stopped overnight in Middletown, they received visits from Richard Alsop, Dr. Eliot Rawson, Benjamin Henshaw, and many others. They assured the visitors that Middletown would support all actions taken, even to a complete stoppage of trade with the British, a significant stand for a town with important overseas trading interests.[3]

The Continental Congress quickly passed the non-import and non-export agreement, often called the Association. The General Assembly in its next session strongly urged all Connecticut to obey the new agreement.

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1. John Warner Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections* (New Haven, 1838), p. 512.
2. David D. Field, *Centennial Address* (Middletown, 1853), p. 65. Samuel Adams had launched the first committee of correspondence at Boston in 1772.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Middletown acted promptly at the end of the year to implement the Association. It set up a committee of seventeen men

> to inspect the Conduct of th[e] Inhabitants of this Town, touching the Said Association a[nd] see the same duly observed and kept, to publish the Nam[e] of any willful Transgressor of said Association . . .[4]

Among the committee members were such local notables as Titus Hosmer, Matthew Talcott, Philip Mortimer, Jehoshephat Starr, and George Phillips.[5] The very prominence of the committee's roster undoubtedly helped to solidify public opinion behind the Association. The town records, at least, give no indication of any widespread violation of the Association. After the actual outbreak of war the town annually chose a committee of inspection with similar duties.[6] The group chosen at the annual meeting on December 27, 1779, for example, totalled seven, of whom Colonel Comfort Sage, Wensley Hobby (Postmaster), and Oliver Hubbard were particularly well known.[7]

EARLY MILITARY ACTIVITIES

The exciting news of the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord reached Middletown in a few hours and produced an immediate reaction. The local light infantry company recently organized under Captain Return Jonathan Meigs[8] assembled hurriedly and marched off, fifty-six strong, to the Boston area. Simultaneously the newly-formed "troop of horse" under Captain Comfort Sage, over fifty strong, gathered and proceeded more rapidly to the same scene. In addition, a small group of seventeen men marched under Lieutenant Amos Hosford. Altogether at least 124 men from Middletown hastened to Boston as a result of the Lexington Alarm.[9] When no further fighting developed in the next few days, the militiamen from Middletown and elsewhere returned home. The first call to arms had required only five days' service for Sage's "troop of horse" and eight days for Meigs' light infantry. Later the

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4. Middletown Town Votes, Vol. II, 1735-1798 (hereafter cited as "Town Votes"), 342-343.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, II, 346, 350, 385.
7. *Ibid.*, II, 385. One man excused. The other members were Andrew Campbell, Adino Pomroy, and Samuel Bull.
8. At the May, 1774, session the General Assembly had consented to the petition of Meigs and others of Middletown to be formed into a light infantry company of sixty men as part of the Sixth Regiment of the Colonial Militia. *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* (hereafter cited as "C. R."), XIV, 296.
9. *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the War of the Revolution . . .* (hereafter cited as "*Rec. Conn. Rev.*") (Hartford, 1869), p. 17.

State approved a bill for £ 177. 14s. 4 d. presented by Middletown for the services of the 124 men.[10] The so-called "Lexington Alarm" thus opened Middletown's military experience in the Revolution. While the episode redounded to the credit of the town, it did not provide in any sense an actual "baptism by fire" for the local men. It undoubtedly, however, did stimulate patriotism, the martial spirit, and a greater awareness of the complex problems facing all American colonists.

More prolonged terms of service soon faced Middletown men. Upon a special early call of the General Assembly in the same spring a regiment was raised to go to the Continental Camp around Boston. It had a heavy representation from the Middletown area. Serving on the staff under Colonel Spencer of East Haddam were Major Meigs, Adjutant Charles Whiting, and Surgeon's Mate, Daniel Southmayd. The Fourth Company of the Regiment was Middletown's own, under Meigs. Most of the five officers and ninety-five non-commissioned officers and privates served from early in May 1775 until discharge late in December.[11] There was no fighting involved—merely steady siege service—but it afforded the first experience with Continental forces.

For a few volunteers from the siege forces, however, the shooting war soon began. After the bold capture of Fort Ticonderoga in May, 1775,[12] many Americans favored an expedition into Canada. Upon approval of the plan, General Richard Montgomery organized thirteen companies of volunteers, mostly New Englanders. Connecticut's quota consisted of one company in which Middletown had at least two representatives; namely, Major Meigs on Benedict Arnold's staff, and Lieutenant Abijah Savage of the Connecticut Company. Lieutenant Savage was captured in the ill-fated attack on Quebec, December 31, 1775, and held a prisoner until his exchange in January 1777.[13] In other campaigns, also, Middletown men were captured by the British. The treatment of prisoners often fell far short of the

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10. Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series (hereafter cited as "A. R. W."), III, docs. 22, 632. Middletown ranked well in "man-days" of service among the towns which sent militiamen to Massachusetts. Seventeen towns had higher totals and thirty-two, lower. A. R. W., III, doc. 632.
11. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, pp. 45, 48, 49.
12. Samuel Holden Parsons, whose family came to Middletown in the War, but who himself settled here only at the end of the struggle, played an important role in planning the Ticonderoga campaign. In this study, however, Parsons will not be considered as a Revolutionary Middletown figure.
13. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, p. 91.

standards expected in eighteenth-century warfare. The petition of a Middletown soldier in 1778 reflected this sad aspect of the struggle.

> On the memorial of Samuel Clark of Mid[d]letown, a soldier in Colo. Bradley's regiment, shewing to this Assembly that he was one of the unhappy men taken at Fort Washington by the enemy and confined in New York untill the month of December, 1776, and then allowed with a number of other persons almost dead to come out on parole, and that he with the help of his friends reached home in a very weak and sickly condition and was necessitated to expend £ 9 12 2 for doctoring and refreshments; praying to have the same refunded out of the public treasury: Resolved by this Assembly, that the memorialist receive out of the treasury of this State the aforesaid sum of £ 9 12 2. . . .[14]

Despite the hardships of war Middletown remained firm in the fight for freedom. In fact, the patriotic fires apparently burned in more than the hearts of the *young* men of Middletown!

> About sixty aged gentlemen at Middletown, (as was the case in other towns in Connecticut) formed themselves into a company to attain the military art, with a determination of preserving the liberty of their country; the drummer of said company was over eighty years of age, and was as much engaged and alert as in his younger days.[15]

LOYALISTS AND PRISONERS

Many States faced a serious Loyalist, or Tory, problem during part or all of the War. Connecticut had only a relatively small number of Loyalists, but they were dangerously concentrated in Fairfield County, especially in Ridgefield and Newtown.[16] Middletown, however, never had any appreciable number of Loyalists. Not a single Middletown inhabitant, for instance, appears in the long list of Connecticut Loyalist owners whose property was confiscated.[17]

An undated petition to the selectmen of Middletown suggests, however, that some disaffection existed.

> . . . And as Stephen Ranney and Widow Mary Bigelow Innkeeper in Middletown, are justly suspected as dispos'd to Aid, and Assist those that are our Enemies, of which their Houses have been Receptacles; And have entertain'd at unseasonable hours of Night known Enemies to their Country; for these and many more Reasons Pray that they may be

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14. *Public Records of the State of Connecticut* (hereafter cited as "S. R"), I, 498.
15. Royal R. Hinsman, *A Historical Collection . . . of the Part Sustained by Connecticut during the War of the Revolution* (Hartford, 1842), p. 47.
16. Otto Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy* (Chapel Hill, 1949), pp. 182-184, 201-203.
17. A. R. W., XXXIV, "Confiscated Estates". At least two parcels of land in Middletown were confiscated, but they belonged to a New York and an ex-Norwich inhabitant respectively. *Ibid.*, XXXIV, doc. 132; also *S. R.*, II, 427; III, 449.

> restrain'd immediately from keeping Tavern. And that some Restrictions be laid on those Persons sent here from other parts, and their Associates who are suspected being Enemies to the United States of America, or be remov'd out of this Town. . . [18]

No less than forty-five persons signed the petition — Chauncey Whittlesey, Ebenezer Sage, David Starr, Seth Wetmore, Jr., and Wensley Hobby being among the signers. No record of further action has been found.

The town's reputation for loyalty and its interior location led early in the War to the quartering in town of various prominent Loyalists, including ex-Governor William Franklin of New Jersey. Franklin, himself, had asked permission to move from Wallingford to Middletown, which the Council of Safety granted. At the same time the Council voted that none of the prisoners at Hartford or Wethersfield be permitted any longer to go into Middletown except by a special license from the Governor.[19] Perhaps procedures had been too lenient. In December 1776, for example, seven Loyalists in Middletown and two in Windham were permitted by the Council of Safety to return home to New York City when they promised not to give intelligence to the enemy nor to take up arms against the United States, and to return to Connecticut on request.[20]

Normal safeguards apparently were inadequate to curb the energetic Franklin. He became a center of Loyalist propaganda, and assiduously distributed the proclamations of the Howe brothers, as well as some of their promises of protection.[21] The rumor spread that some members of the General Assembly had accepted the protection documents.[22] In any event Middletown patriots soon had had enough of ex-Governor Franklin. At the town meeting of January 7, 1777, they voted that Captain Samuel Russell, Colonel Comfort Sage, and Seth Wetmore, Jr., be a committee to present a petition to Governor Trumbull to "remove Said Governor Franklin . . . for Safety of this

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18. MS. (undated) in box entitled "Connecticut Towns, Li-Newt", at Connecticut Historical Society.
19. *C. R.*, XV, 482.
20. *S. R.*, I, 152.
21. The Howe brothers issued proclamations calling upon all Americans to pledge their loyalty to the King and to give up the Patriot cause. In return the Howes offered certificates of pardon and protection by British arms.
22. Titus Hosmer, then in Philadelphia as a delegate to Congress, evinced much concern over Franklin's pernicious deeds in Middletown. Hosmer asked William Williams to seek factual proof of the claim that three members of the General Assembly had received "protections" from Franklin at Middletown. Hosmer to Williams, June 22, 1777, Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress,* II, 362 n.

Town & State."[23] Word of Franklin's machinations, meanwhile, had reached the Continental Congress and caused that body to take vigorous countermeasures. A resolve of Congress on April 22, 1777, took cognizance of Franklin's dangerous activities and requested Governor Trumbull to order Franklin into close confinement without access to other persons or writing materials.[24]

Eight days later the Council of Safety considered a Congressional resolution and voted to convey Franklin to Litchfield with full instructions for the sheriff there.[25] Doubtless Middletown was overjoyed to see the last of him! Little more was heard of dangerous Loyalist prisoners at Middletown for the remainder of the war.

SOME SIGNIFICANT LEADERS

The two most outstanding revolutionary political figures of Middletown undoubtedly were Titus Hosmer and Jabez Hamlin. Each left an indelible imprint not only upon Middletown but also upon the wider American scene.

Hosmer, a Yale graduate of 1757, settled in Middletown about 1760 and undertook the practice of law. He married Lydia Lord in November 1761.[26] Hosmer rapidly forged to the front in his profession, and won various public positions of responsibility. He served as one of the town's two representatives in the General Assembly from October 1773 until May 1778, at which time he was elected an Assistant in the Upper House.[27] Known as a Moderate Whig in his politics,[28] he served on the local committee of correspondence set up in 1774.

In the legislature Hosmer devoted his time to a variety of duties on committees dealing with such matters as production of lead and sulphur, buying flax and axes for public use, investigating Yale's problems, auditing State accounts, and procuring fire-arms and gun-locks.[29] A signal honor came in election to the small Connecticut delegation to the Interstate Providence Convention in December 1776;

23. Town Votes, II, 351. Early in January 1777 Franklin had sent a strong letter to Governor Trumbull "remonstrating in terms more sharp than decent" against the Governor's failure to answer an earlier letter. Fanklin wanted to return to his family. The Council, with Hosmer one of the four present, advised the Governor not to accede to the request. *S. R.*, I, 154.
24. *Journals of Congress,* II, 121.
25. *S. R.*, I, 217.
26. Eight children were born of this union, of whom seven survived the father. *Middletown, Births, Marriages, Deaths,* II, 217.
27. Field, *Centennial Address,* pp. 97-98.
28. Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy,* p. 167.
29. *C. R.*, XV, 17-18, 199, 482. *S. R.*, I, 217, 424; II, 412.

and to one at Springfield the next summer.[30] The Conventions met to discuss and recommend action on some of the economic and political problems created by the War.

The State regularly chose Hosmer as one of its spokesmen in the Continental Congress, although he actually served only during the summer of 1778.[31] His trenchant comments on the behavior of many members have a modern note!

> Nine States make a Congress, some States have delegates so very negligent so much immersed in the pursuit of pleasure or business, that it is very rare we can make a Congress before near eleven o'clock . . . and those who occasion the delay are callous to admonition and reproof . . . . When we are assembled several gentlemen have such a knack at starting questions of order, raising debates upon critical, captious, and trifling amendments, calling for the previous question, and other acts [so] that . . . precious time is lost, and the public business left undone.[32]

From time to time Hosmer attended meetings of the Governor's Council of Safety, which more than any other group handled the day-by-day problems of the wartime State. He was especially active in this way early in 1777 both at Middletown, and at Lebanon, the usual rendezvous. Hosmer took his duties seriously, especially the tedious aspects, as the Council minutes plainly reveal: "Mr. Hosmer stayed in town, was employed all Monday writing letters, &c."[33]

In 1780, after lengthy discussion, Congress decided to establish a special court of appeals to handle final appeals of all cases involving captures at sea. George Wythe of Virginia, William Paca of Maryland, and Titus Hosmer were chosen as the first judges. In February Hosmer received official notification of his election to this important tribunal.[34] He never undertook the challenging new duties, for he died suddenly on August 4, 1780, at only forty-four years of age. Thus Middletown lost one of its most illustrious citizens at the height of his career.

In many ways Jabez Hamlin's Revolutionary career resembled that of Titus Hosmer. Hamlin too was prominent as a *civil* rather

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30. Hosmer was in distinguished company. Eliphalet Dyer, Nathaniel Wales, and Richard Law were fellow-delegates at Providence; Roger Sherman and Samuel Huntington, at Springfield. *S. R.,* I, 585, 601.
31. The legislature normally elected *five* delegates to the Congress and hoped that at least *three* would be in attendance. *C. R.,* XV, 136 (*e. g.*). Sometimes, however, it was difficult to keep even one member there.
32. Titus Hosmer to Governor Trumbull, August 31, 1778, Edmund G. Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress,* III, 394-396.
33. *S. R.,* I, 152-216, *passim.*
34. Burnett, *op. cit.,* V, 12, 19, 24-25.

than as a *military* leader. He was active in the legislature, although in the small Upper House, rather than the Lower House. He served as Judge of the Hartford County Court and of the Probate Court for the Middletown District.[35] One finds frequent references to membership on important committees dealing with printing of "bills of credit", the lead mine, sulphur, Mohegan Indians, and revision of the militia laws.[36] From time to time he sat with the Governor's Council of Safety. In the military line of endeavor he got only as far as being appointed lieutenant in a company of the Militia in October 1776.[37] By and large, Hamlin's record in the Revolution was filled with hard, unspectacular work for a Patriot cause. When Middletown was incorporated as one of the first four cities of the State in 1784, Hamlin became the first mayor — ample evidence of the high regard of his fellow-townsmen.

Among the other Middletown personalities who deserve recognition for Revolutionary services are Richard Alsop, Benjamin Henshaw, Elijah Hubbard, Nehemiah Hubbard, Samuel Russell, Comfort Sage, and Chauncey Whittlesey.

Richard Alsop came to Middletown about 1750 and set up a business shop on Main Street. He specialized in the West Indian trade with such success that he amassed a sizable fortune. At a time when strong American insurance companies were unknown Alsop insured ships for other foreign traders.[38] It is not surprising that a man of such weight in local business affairs also should play a significant role in public matters.

Alsop served many terms as deputy for Middletown in the legislature during the years from 1764 to 1774. He had a large family, including Richard Alsop later famous as one of the "Connecticut Wits". Alsop was beginning to assume important responsibilities in the war effort when death cut short his career in April, 1776.[39]

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35. *C. R.*, XV, 224. He was judge of the Probate Court from the foundation in 1752 until 1789. He married twice: first, Mrs. Abigail Chauncey of Durham in 1749; and, after her death in 1768, he married Mrs. Susanna Whittlesey in April 1771. Four children were born of the first union. See *Births, Marriages, Deaths,* II.
36. *C. R.*, XV, 14, 40, 99, 101, 115, 199, 306, 440, 507; *S. R.*, I, 428; II, 22, 138, 289, 420, 480.
37. *S. R.*, I, 31.
38. *The History of Middlesex County* (New York, 1884), p. 156.
39. Alsop married Mary Wright in 1760. They had eleven children, nine of whom survived their father. *Births, Marriages, Deaths,* II. In *C. R.*, XIV, 94, and XV, 144, are references to Alsop's membership on a committee to run a lottery for buoys and other navigation aids on the Connecticut River.

Benjamin Henshaw in January 1777 took over as one of the two managers of the Salisbury iron foundry, the most important source of cannon and cannon ball in New England. This position involved many perplexing problems of supply, labor force, technique, and transportation, but the managers met them with remarkable success. The State reappointed Henshaw at the end of his first year. Upon completion of two years' service he requested and was granted release from the arduous duties.[40]

Nehemiah Hubbard and Elijah Hubbard both were highly active in the supply business for the military forces. The former acted in 1777 as the deputy-quartermaster-general for Connecticut. Later he turned to the work of obtaining supplies for the French Army, and he even accompanied the French forces to Yorktown.[41] In 1779, he organized a trip to Charleston to obtain much needed rice.[42]

Elijah Hubbard for many months filled the position of chief commissary for the Connecticut soldiers in the Continental Army. He purchased and transported provisions, clothing, and other supplies. The Governor and Council appointed him to the position on May 16, 1777, and three days later gave him elaborate instructions as to procedures. The complexity of the job was enormous. It involved collecting rum, sugar, flour, clothing and many other items from agents in all parts of the State, transporting them, providing forage for the teams, supervising the issuing commissaries, keeping careful records of all items handled and issued, and separate accounts for all expenses and disbursements.[43] A steady stream of special problems and orders followed in the ensuing months.[44] A typical one was this:

> Mr. Elij. Hubbard issuing commissary for this State, applies to be furnished with spirits for the use of our soldiery &C., and on consideration: Ordered, that Cap. Jz. Perkins of Norwich deliver and send to said Hubbard twenty hogsheads of the molasses in his hands

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40. *S. R.*, I, 157, 574-575; II, 303. The other manager was William Whiting. Years later Henshaw still was trying to collect some £ 442 due him as furnace manager. He finally was granted the claim to be paid out of a tax levied in 1782. A. R. W., XXII, docs. 238-239.
41. Field, *Centennial Address,* p. 86.
42. Robert East, *Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era* (New York, 1938), p. 97.
43. *S. R.*, I, 314, 317-318. Royal Flint of Windham seems to have assumed fairly early a sort of joint headship. *Ibid.*, I, 421.
44. A typical sample was the Council of Safety's request of October 24, 1777, for Hubbard to deliver 400 pounds of wheat to the overseers of the lead mine, and also, as much flour as they needed. *Ibid.*, I, 453.

belonging to this State, to be by said H. improved and manufactured into spirits for the use of our soldiers. Order delivered Gen. Huntington.[45]

A General Assembly Act of April 1779 resolved:

> That Mr. Elijah Hubbard of Middletown be and is hereby impowered and directed forthwith to purchase and procure a suitable quantity of shoes, skirts, white stockings and linnen cloath, proper for the continental troops in the Connecticut Line, taking care that the several articles be of good quality and workmanship and suitable size for the use of said troops, and make return of his proceedings therein to the Assembly early in their session in May next.[46]

The next month the General Assembly officially appointed Hubbard "a Sub or State Cloathier for this State" to stay with the Connecticut Line and oversee distributions of clothing to the men. In the same act Chauncey Whittlesey of Middletown was made a "Purchasing Cloathier" to buy and forward clothing to the sub-clothiers, such as Hubbard. The same act called on each town to provide two linen shirts, two pairs of linen overalls, one pair of shoes, two pairs of stockings, and one "frock or hunting shirt" for each soldier up to four-fifths of the quota assigned the town.[47] Hubbard apparently found the work full of headaches as the towns usually failed to fill their quotas on time. In July, 1781, the Council of Safety gave Hubbard and his subordinates the power to impress needed articles from towns deficient in filling their requisitions.[48] In his long term of service performing one of the most harassing jobs possible, Hubbard made a highly significant contribution to Connecticut's military effort.

Other Middletown figures of distinction were Comfort Sage, Matthew Talcott, and Samuel Russell. Sage was active in local mercantile affairs for many years previous to the war. During the war he devoted no little time to public affairs both civilian and military. Right after the outbreak of trouble he went to Boston as second in command of a regiment. After the resignation of fellow-townsman Matthew Talcott as Colonel of the Twenty-third Regiment of Militia, Sage took his place.[49] Much time was taken up also, in attendance upon eight of the regular sessions of the General Assembly in the period 1776-1783.[50]

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45. *Ibid.*, II, 96. Council of Safety action on June 30, 1778.
46. *Ibid.*, II, 235.
47. *Ibid.*, II, 277-278.
48. *Ibid.*, II, 471.
49. *Ibid.*, I, 30; *C. R.*, XV, 228 n.
50. Beginning in May 1776 and ending with May 1783 session.

Captain Samuel Russell, active before and after the war as a land trader, came into prominence in the war effort chiefly for his work on the lead mine committee, which he joined in December, 1776. Apparently he handled various purchases, and also delivered lead to the selectmen of other towns such as Glastonbury and Killingworth. The legislature also entrusted him in 1779 with the sale of sundry tools and utensils left at the closed mine works.[51] Captain Russell also acted on the committee which asked for the removal of ex-governor Franklin.[52]

Matthew Talcott was another of the town's figures who played a very busy role in public life during the Revolutionary era. The town sent him to the General Assembly for nine sessions in the 1772-1782 period. Among other duties he served on committees to watch over the interests of soldiers' families, to oversee the lead mine, and to conduct the lottery for improvement of navigation on the Connecticut River. As a note of variety in committee assignments he had the dubious privilege in the fall of 1776 of interrogating ex-Governor Franklin and his servant concerning the recent machinations of that notorious Tory. Talcott also saw brief military service with the Militia. For a time he acted as Colonel of the Twenty-third Regiment, and in March 1776 was ordered to proceed with ninety men to New York for service under Washington.[53]

From this brief survey of Middletown's leadership in the War years it is quite evident that it was of high caliber. The influence of Middletown citizens spread far out into the wider spheres of State and Continental affairs. It is an interesting fact that Middletown happened to produce a far larger number of eminent civil leaders than military ones.

TOWN OFFICIALS

Under the Connecticut town system of local government the selectmen have been highly influential figures. A glance at Middletown's roll of selectmen, therefore, is relevant.

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51. *S. R.*, I, 129; II, 163, 214, 219, 302, 353. In May 1779 the State ordered payment to him on account of the lead mine of £ 239. 16 s. 3½ d. This was prior to his sale of tools.

52 Russell undertook varied tasks and positions such as land surveyor, collector of colonial excise taxes, first constable, collector of town taxes, auditor, fence viewer, and occasional moderator of town meeting. He was a captain in the Militia, but never served in the field during the Revolution. Edwin Stearns, "Memorials of William Russell" (typewritten genealogical study), p. 60.

53. *C. R.*, XV, 33, 99, 144, 145, 258; *S. R.*, I, 22, 36.

Selectmen 1775 - 1783

Name	*Elected at December Town Meetings In*							
	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782
Titus Hosmer	*	*						
Capt. Philip Mortimer	*	*						
Josiah Bacon	*							
Benjamin Galpin	*	*						
Capt. Isaac Miller	*			*	*	*	*	*
George Phillips	*	*						
Deacon Solomon Sage	*	*						
Matthew Talcott		*						
Deacon Giles Miller		*	*					
Timothy Boardman			*					
Chauncey Whittlesey			*	*	*	*		
John Kirby			*	*				
Abijah ?			*					
Capt. Thomas Goodwin			*	*	*	*	*	*
Elijah Treadway			*	*				
Lt. Hugh White				*	*	*	*	*
Elijah Hubbard				*	*	*	*	*
Lamberton Cooper					*	*	*	
Amos Hosford					*	*	*	*
Seth Wetmore							*	*
Comfort Sage[54]								*

It is of interest to note the rapid turnover in selectmen. Not a single person served throughout the war, and some twenty different people acted in one or more of the seven years tabulated. The absence of Titus Hosmer from the roll after 1776-1777 may be explained by the press of larger duties, as may that of others. On the other hand, the very busy commissary, Elijah Hubbard, consented to act as selectman for five consecutive years.

During the Revolution Middletown continued to elect its large assortment of town officials. On December 4, 1776, for example, the townspeople elected an impressive number of officials beyond the seven selectmen. These included: town treasurer, George Phillips, nine "listers", a sealer of weights, a sealer of dry measures, two fence viewers, four "guagers", four leather sealers, seven branders of horses, six pound and key keepers, four packers of meat, thirty-eight surveyors of highways, sixteen tithing men, seven constables, and twelve grand jurors.[55]

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54. Town Votes, II, *passim.*
55. Town Votes, II, 349-350.

Other important Middletown officials during the Revolutionary period included:

Judge of Probate Court — Jabez Hamlin (1752-1789)
Portmaster — Wensley Hobby (1775-1807)
Town Clerks — Joseph Clark (1765-1777)
Bezaleel Fisk (1777-1797)

Justices of the Peace

Richard Alsop
Nathaniel Chauncey
Joseph Clark
Jabre Dickinson
Nathaniel Gilbert
Jabez Hamlin
Titus Hosmer
Isaac Miller
Philip Mortimer
George Phillips
Matthew Talcott
Elijah Treadway
Seth Wetmore[56]

During the eight years of the Revolution the town sent, in all, five representatives to the Lower House — Ebenezer Bacon, Dr. John Dickinson, Titus Hosmer, Comfort Sage, and Matthew Talcott.[57]

AID TO SOLDIERS' DEPENDENTS

During the Revolution no regular system of national allotments and other aid to dependents existed, a situation which acted as a definite deterrent to enlistment on the part of married men with numerous dependents. In spite of the privations involved for one's self and family, however, more than a few married men did volunteer for Continental service.[58] The town officially pledged itself, as in a resolve of April 14, 1777, to see that the soldiers' families were supplied with necessities "at the prices limited by Law". Chauncey Whittlesey was one of a committee of twenty formed to carry out this resolve.[59] As in more recent wars, nothing incensed soldiers then much more than having their families fleeced by profiteers on the essentials of life.

In raising supplies it was customary to allot each town a definite quota based upon the number of troops in service from that town. On September 25, 1777, for example, the town voted to appoint a committee in each school district to provide the clothing as ordered

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56. *C. R.*, XV, 8, 277; *S. R.*, I, 222; II, 6, 254; III, 8, 373; Field, *Centennial Address*, pp. 228, 229, 233.
57. The town, of course, could send no more than two representatives to any one session.
58. Occasionally pathetic cases were reported. Mary Robinson of Middletown in a petition to the General Assembly told of the death of her husband in battle. She was left with six children to care for. She asked to receive supplies from the state as did the families of soldiers in the Army. At the January 1780 session the legislature denied the petition. A.R.W., XVIII, doc. 12.
59. Town Votes, II, 53.

by the Governor and Council a fortnight earlier.[60] In January, 1778, the legislature ordered every town to provide a long list of clothing for each of its Continental soldiers. In response Middletown called a special town meeting on March 9, at which Jabez Hamlin presided. The town appointed twenty-six men as a special committee to secure the required clothing. As a start, nineteen persons voluntarily offered to provide a total of eighteen blankets and twenty-eight "Sutes".[61] Titus Hosmer, Comfort Sage, Elijah Hubbard, Chauncey Whittlesey, Hugh White, and Ebenezer Bacon seem to have been among the most active in such committee work through the years until the work ceased in 1783.[62] From an early date the pattern became set by which one committeeman would look after the needs of one Continental soldier's family. The town paid the cost and was later reimbursed by the State. The committee organization worked out as follows:

Date Committee Organized	*Number on Committee*	*Number of Soldiers' Families Cared for*
December 1779	34	35
December 1780	21	21
December 1781	17	18
December 1782	15	15

Elijah Hubbard stood out as the only man on the list ever to assume responsibility for two families. The listing was made like this:

Lieut. Jez Barcon to Provide for Gideon	Crittentons Family
Mr. Elijah Hubbard	John Harris
Do Do	Ozias Cone

On the whole, Middletown seems to have done a conscientious job of providing supplies to soldiers' families.[63]

THE MIDDLETOWN LEAD MINE

A significant chapter of Middletown's Revolutionary history revolved about the lead mine, unquestionably the most important one in Connecticut. This mine, located in a small ravine a short distance above the Narrows, and close to the River, apparently was first worked early in the colonial period and then abandoned for many years.[64] With the outbreak of war, lead suddenly came into high demand for

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60. *Ibid.* II, 355.
61. Town Records Middletown, Envelope 3, 1778.
62. Town Votes, II, 382, 395, 405, 413, etc.
63. *Ibid.* If a committee member failed to provide the supplies, he could be fined and the fine paid to another person who would perform the task. *Ibid.*, p. 382.
64. Forest Morgan, ed., *Connecticut as a Colony and a State* (Hartford, 1904), I, 505.

bullets and cannon ball. The General Assembly was aware of the problem and in May 1775 appointed three Middletown leaders, Jabez Hamlin, Matthew Talcott, and Titus Hosmer "to provide such stores of lead as they shall judge necessary for the use of this Colony."[65] The committee put in a very large amount of time on the project for the next three years or so. Frequent references to the mining and smelting operations appear in official records. One finds the Council of Safety on September 14, 1775, ordering 300 pounds of powder delivered to the committee for "raising the lead ore".[66] A month earlier the Governor had informed General Washington that seven or eight tons of rich ore had been mined, and smelting would soon begin.[67] Never did the bullet supply seem adequate to Washington and other military leaders so that great pressure was exerted on the mine operators to produce greater amounts. The Council of Safety observing an upward tendency in lead prices in July 1776 fixed the price at six pence per pound.[68]

Considerable production was achieved, though never as much as hoped for or needed. At the December 1776 session of the legislature, Captain Samuel Russell of Middletown was added to the lead committee, and he played a prominent role in its later activities.[69] In December 1776 the committee reported a total of 5140 pounds of lead on hand ready for distribution to the towns, and the General Assembly ordered the lead cast into bullets.[70]

In February 1778 the legislators took stock of the overall progress of the lead project and decided that whereas "it appears . . . that said manufacture is unprofitable and far from answering the expectations of the public and the salutary purposes for which it was designed", the undertaking should be terminated as soon as the materials on hand were used up.[71] Actually, the vein of lead was

65. *C. R.,* XV, 37. The State paid rent to John Sebastian Stephany, lessee of the mine. *Ibid.,* XV, 368-369.
66. *Ibid.,* XV, 130.
67. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* L, 2-3. In April 1776 Washington asked for as much lead as possible from this source. John Fitzgerald, *Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D. C., 1938), IV, 497.
68. *C. R.,* XV, 459.
69. *S. R.,* I, 129-130; II, 163, 214, 219, 302, 353. To Russell fell the tedious task of disposing of tools and settling the accounts after the project ended, *ibid.,* I, 302.
70. *Ibid.,* I, 129-130. The committee listed 4273 pounds of lead balls as delivered to State authorities in the period September 26—December 31, 1776. A. R.W., XIV, doc. 298.
71. *S. R.,* I, 538.

nearly exhausted[72] which undoubtedly was a chief factor in the rising costs of mining and refining.

Despite the unhappy note involved in the closing, the project certainly cannot fairly be considered a failure. Out of it came large amounts of vitally needed cannon ball and bullets for the patriot cause—some 15,563 pounds of ball and lead according to a report of the committee.[73]

An interesting sidelight to the lead mine story was the attempt to refine sulphur from the sulphur ore in the lead mine. In 1776 Thomas Bidwell of Pennsylvania persuaded the legislature to back him in the sulphur project to the extent of providing free ore and free sulphur pots, and a guaranteed price for all sulphur produced. The costs of the venture mounted steadily upward, but no finished sulphur was forthcoming. Before the skeptics could raise loud outcries, the closing down of the lead mine in 1778 conclusively terminated Bidwell's well-meaning but unsuccessful efforts.[74]

PRIVATEERING

The use of privateers to prey upon British merchantmen constituted an important part of the American naval effort. The Connecticut River towns sent out a large number of privateers — eighty-six at least, of which Middletown contributed sixteen.[75] The local privateers enjoyed a mixture of success and failure. The brigantine *Delight,* for example, made several successful voyages before being captured. Under the command of Ebenezer Sage, armed with eight guns and manned by a crew of twenty, it made its first trip to Grenada. On its second voyage the records list Nathan Post of Saybrook as commander and Comfort Sage and Company of Middletown as owners. Later Samuel Johnson of Middletown succeeded to the command, and directed the vessel on a cruise to the West Indies. The *Connecticut Gazette* for November 1, 1782, reported that the

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72. William North Rice and William Garland Foye, *Guide to the Geology of Middletown, Connecticut, and vicinity* (Hartford, 1927), p. 82.
73. A. R. W., XIV, doc. 298. This was the total delivered to the State through March 20, 1779. Costs were high too. Titus Hosmer reported in May 1779 that the lead committee had disbursed £ 5051. 4 s. 2¾ d. in all. *Ibid.,* XIV, doc. 299.
74. *C. R.,* XV, 325 f.; A. R. W., V, docs., 347-350, 354, 355; XII, doc. 59.
75. Albert E. Van Dusen, Trade of Revolutionary Connecticut (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania; copy at Connecticut State Library), p. 241.

British captured the ship and took it to New York[76] — the end of many Connecticut privateers.

The sloop *Dolphin,* with ten guns and twenty-five crew, owned by Ebenezer Sage and Company, made at least one voyage under the command of Joseph Smith. Its entire complement seems to have been Middletown men.[77]

The schooner *Bunker Hill,* with ten guns and a crew of forty-five men, was owned by Comfort Sage and Company, also. Under the command of Captain Sanford Thompson, it engaged in several exciting battles and captures. On April 14, 1780, it fell in with the more heavily-armed British privateer, *Dolphin,* from St. Kitts. In the ensuing battle, two Americans were killed, and the Captain and three others wounded. Two weeks later Captain Thompson brought into port, as a prize, the British schooner, *Lee,* with a rich cargo of rum, sugar, and molasses. About a month later Captain Thompson captured a ship from Barbados with 450 hogsheads of rum.[78]

TRADE

Privateering provided much adventure and occasional large profits, but it was not a solid substitute for the normal ocean-going trade of Middletown.

In the eighteenth-century Middletown, in common with other Connecticut ports, developed an important ocean trade, most of it directly with the West Indies. Such articles as beef, pork, flour, horses, cattle, sheep, and lumber were carried to the Islands; and rum, sugar, molasses, and salt were brought back.[79] In the West Indian trade, Middletown seems to have been the leading River town. Among the local merchants who engaged in this trade were Comfort Sage, George and Thompson Phillips, Elijah and Nehemiah Hubbard, Lemuel Storrs, and Richard Alsop. Of the entire group, Alsop derived the greatest profits.[80] The outbreak of war, and the establishment of a British blockade of Long Island Sound largely prevented Connecticut merchantmen from going to the West Indies, or anywhere else. The records on ship clearances are very skimpy

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76. Louis F. Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut during the American Revolution,* (Salem, Mass., 1925) II, 69-71.
77. *Ibid.,* II, 71-72.
78. *Ibid.,* II, 63.
79. *C. R.,* XI, 629.
80. Grace T. Chafee, "Middletown", *Connecticut Magazine,* IV, 20-21; Field, *Centennial Address,* pp. 61-62.

as Arnold's raiders burned the customs' records at New London. The New Haven records of the period indicate little activity by Middletown ships.[81] An occasional Middletown merchantman may have slipped through the blockade, but the total number certainly was tiny. The only alternative was privateering, in which profits were very uncertain. By and large, one may say that Middletown's West Indian trade, as such, nearly ceased during the Revolution.[82]

However, in the matter of local trade, a much happier picture existed. Located far enough inland to be safe from the likelihood of British invasion, Middletown suffered far less interference with its normal peacetime commercial pattern. The town's small agricultural hinterland also remained exempt from British attack. Another favoring factor was the diversion of much across-the-State and interstate traffic from the Shore Road to more northerly routes, including those through Middletown. Other factors also stimulated commercial activity. Middletown became one of the chief supply depots for the Continental Army; and the supplies were forwarded to the New York area, and later in much greater quantity to the Mid-Hudson Valley.[83] The war-time supply business in which Nehemiah Hubbard, Elijah Hubbard, and Chauncey Whittlesey were key figures, definitely quickened and enlarged trading activities.[84]

Unfortunately, no Middletown paper was printed until after the Revolution, but the *Connecticut Courant* of Hartford in its advertisements reflected much of Middletown's mercantile life. A list of local merchants who advertised in the *Courant* is suggestive of this.

Name	*Products Advertised*	*Years Advertising*
Bates and Austin	Dry goods	1782
Samuel Buell	Silversmith	1777, 1779-80
William Clay	"Russia duck"	1780

81. In the period of September 27, 1776, through July 2, 1779, customs records show that only *two* ships entered New Haven from Middletown. During this time a total of sixty ships entered the port. "New Haven Coasters Inward" (MS. at National Archives).
82. New London, the leading privateering port of Connecticut, found privateering a very poor substitute for normal trade and suffered economic depression throughout the War. Frances M. Caulkins, *History of New London* (New London, 1885), p. 536. See Van Dusen, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-156, 236-245, 369-381, for further information on leading phases of Connecticut foreign trade and privateering.
83. Ralph Pomeroy, Assistant Quartermaster, reported on July 15, 1781, that seventeen teams were loading at Middletown with ordnance stores and rum for movement to the Continental Army. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, p. 627 n.
84. Van Dusen, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.

Name	*Products Advertised*	*Years Advertising*
James Cornwell	Wine	1783
William Durie	French indigo	1777-1778
E. Fenno	Wine, sugar, spices	1777-1778
Samuel Gill	West Indies goods	1775-1776
Thomas Green	English, East and West Indies goods	1775-1776
Wensley Hobby	Dry goods	1777-78, 1781-83
Elijah Hubbard	West Indies goods	1783
Mary Jehonet [Jehonnet]	Dry goods	1775-1776
Joseph King	Wine	1778
James Lamb (& Son)	Dry goods	1776-1777
Silas Laurens	Salt, oil	1779
Giles Mergo	Nail rods	1779
Return Mergo	Coppers	1781
Jonathan Palmer	Rum, salt, breeches	1780
Joshua Plumb	Codfish	1774
John Rogers	Drums	1774-1775
Ebenezer Sage	Coats, train oil	1777-1778
Comfort Sage	West Indies goods	1782
Lemuel Storrs	Dry and West Indies goods	1782
George Thomson	European and Indies goods	1773
Jacob Whittimore	Teapots	1781
Chauncey Whittlesey		1778
Dr. Willis	Drugs	1773 85

In summary it may be said that wartime conditions favored mercantile activity in Middletown. The farmers in the town, the largest occupational group, benefited greatly from the sale of their surplus produce to Continental and State commissaries. Thus they had more funds available for purchases from Middletown merchants. The overall wartime mercantile picture in Middletown was one of considerable prosperity.[86]

MILITARY SERVICE IN CONTINENTAL ARMY, STATE TROOPS, AND THE MILITIA, 1776-1783

It is impossible in brief compass to give the names and records of all Middletown men who had a Revolutionary military record. Most of the principal commissioned officers and a sampling of the non-commissioned officers and privates are all whom space permits to be included here. A listing of the former follows.

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85. The spellings of proper names are given as they appear in *The Connecticut Courant.*
86. Van Dusen, *op. cit.,* pp. 391-392.

I. *General and Staff Officers, 1776*

Charles Whiting — aide-de-camp to Gen. Spencer; earlier adjutant
Elihu Lyman — Ensign, Col. Huntington's 17th Continental Regt. — wounded and taken prisoner at Battle of Long Island; exchanged May 1778
Elihu Hubbard — Captain, 17th Continental Regt.
Ebenezer Sumner — Captain, Col. Wylly's 22nd Continental Regt.
Robert Warner — 1st Lt., 22nd Continental Regiment — reentered Continental service in 1777

These men saw service in the New York campaign, including the Battle of Long Island. Nehemiah Hubbard was in the regiment which went to Quebec and later was stationed near Ticonderoga.

II. *Continental Line, 1777-1781*

Stephen Ranney, Jr. — Surgeon-General's Department, March 1777 - October 1780

Col. Wylly's Third Regiment

Robert Warner, Capt., 1777-1781
Edward Eells, Capt., 1777-1781
Hezekiah Hubbard, Lt., 1777-1781
George Cotton, Ens., 1777-1780. Promoted to ensign in 1780.

Col. John Durkee's Fourth Regiment

John Sumner, Lt. Col., 1777-1781

Col. Philip B. Bradley's Fifth Regiment

Jonathan Johnson, Lt. Col., 1777-1781
William Henshaw, Paymaster, 1777-1781. Appointed 1778 (Ensign earlier) 87

Col. Return Jonathan Meigs' Sixth Regiment, 1777-1781 88

Return Jonathan Meigs, promoted from Lt. Col. of Sherburne's "Additional" Regt. on May 12, 1777; Sag Harbor, May 1777; Light Regt. at Stony Point, July 1779; relieved January 1, 1781
Timothy Hosmer, surgeon, 1779-1781
David Starr, Capt., 1777-1781 (appointed Capt. 1780)

Col. Sherburne's "Additional" Regiment, 1777-1781 89

Return Jonathan Meigs, Lt. Col., 1777 (January-May)
Abijah Savage, Capt., 1777-1780, earlier to Quebec, exchanged 1777
Jesse Peck, Lt., 1777-1778
Elijah Blackman, Capt., 1777-?
Amos Galpin, Ens., 1777-1780 90

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87. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, pp. 98, 101, 107, 143, 169, 182, 193, 194.
88. This regiment saw much active service in the Hudson area in outpost duty, Ft. Montgomery episode, Stony Point, West Point, building fortifications, etc. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
89. This regiment apparently had practically no actual fighting.
90. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, pp. 205, 206, 253-255.

The majority of Middletown's citizens who served in the Continental Line were, of course, in the humbler ranks of non-commissioned officers and privates. In Colonel Sherburne's "Additional" Regiment at least eight non-commissioned officers and sixteen privates served. Most of them enlisted in Captain Abijah Savage's Company in the spring of 1777 and served until March or April of 1780. Not a single man became a casualty of any sort.[91]

In 1777 a special corps was raised in Connecticut to serve with the Continental Army. The statistics on the group of fifteen Middletown men in the "First Troop" of this corps are more complete than usual, and thus give an interesting close-up view of their service records.

Name	*Rank*	*Date of Enlistment*	*Promotion*	*Occupation*	*Notes*
Butler Gilbert	Sgt.	Dec. 27 '76	—	Farmer	Disch. Sept. 30 '80
Joseph Cone	Cpl.	Jan. 31 '77	—	Shoemaker	Deserted, Apr. 4 '78
Jonathan Roberts	Trumpeter	Jan. 13 '77	—	Farmer	Disch. in '78
James Johnson	Pvt.	Feb. 3 '77	Cpl., Jan '78	Joiner	
Daniel Robinson	Pvt.	Dec. 27 '76	Trumpeter, May '78	Blacksmith	
Richard Daude	Pvt.	Apr. 1 '78	Farrier, June '78	Blacksmith	
David Atkins	Pvt.	May 1 '78	—	Farmer	
Abijah Hubbard	Pvt.	Mar. 19 '77	Cpl., Jan '78	Farmer	
Elijah Clark	Pvt.	May 1 '78	—	Farmer	
Jonathan Chauncey	Pvt.	Mar. 22 '77	—	Farmer	Killed Dec. 4 '77 in Pennsylvania
James McDavid	Pvt.	Jan. 8 '77	—	Barber	
Allen Gilbert	Pvt.	Apr. 1 '78	—	Farmer	
Thomas Pentland	Pvt.	Dec. 6 '79	—	Shoemaker	
Jacob Rash	Pvt.	Feb. 3 '77	—	Tailor	
Jonathan Treat	Pvt.	Jan. 13 '77		Farmer	Waggoner[92]

The men signed up either for three years' service or for the duration, probably mostly the latter. It is of interest to note the occupational listings. Middletown still had a predominantly agricultural economy so that it is not strange to find "farmer" the occupation most often

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255. The Company Book of Captain Abijah Savage (MS. in Connecticut State Library) gives much pertinent information on this group. It includes weekly returns of arms, clothing, and other equipment.
92. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, pp 273-274. The height, complexion, and color of hair and eyes of each man also are given.

listed. In the "Fourth Troop" of the same corps seven out of eight Middletown men classified themselves as farmers.[93]

In the reorganized Continental Line of 1781-1783 Middletown men filled many positions of real responsibility. Major Robert Warner was on the staff of Colonel John Durkee's First Regiment. He also commanded a company of fifty-seven men in the same Regiment composed largely, or perhaps entirely, of Middletown soldiers. Lieutenant Hezekiah Hubbard and Ensign George Cotton served under him as company officers from 1777 to 1781. Captain Edward Eells headed another company which, like Major Warner's company, saw active service only during the year 1781.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Johnson was second in command of the Second Regiment, Connecticut Line, 1781-1783, while William Henshaw was paymaster on the same staff. In the Third Regiment John Meigs was adjutant and Ebenezer Frothingham, quartermaster.[94]

One of the best personal accounts of army service is found in the Journal of Oliver Boardman, of Middletown. He served in 1776 in Colonel Matthew Talcott's regiment at New York and on Long Island. His next call to service came in the final stages of the Saratoga campaign. Finally in May 1780 he put in six months of service on the Hudson River.

He gives a fairly detailed story of his participation in the Saratoga venture. On September 2, 1777, he set out with Captain "Blacque's" company and ten days later joined General Arnold's troops at Stillwater Farm. A week later, on September 19, the Company saw heavy action and suffered casualties of eleven killed, thirty-six wounded, and three missing, but took forty-six prisoners. In the next few days Boardman reported a steady stream of British deserters who were "very scant for Provision". Soon thereafter the British position became hopeless, and General Burgoyne asked for terms. Boardman's comments were jubilant:

> Friday [October] 17th, 1777 The Hand of Providence work'd wonderfully. In favor of America this Day. . . . . .
> It was a glorious sight to see the haughty Brittons march out & Surrender their arms to an Army which but a little before, they despised and called paltroons.

Boardman was one of fifty men called out to take 128 prisoners to

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93. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 316, 317, 322, 330. Major Warner served continuously from May 1775 to January 1, 1783; Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, from 1777 to June 1783.

Hartford. There must have been some who disappeared as the Journal reported the arrival of 123 prisoners, and commented that "five of them Left us on the March".[95]

The great depreciation of the Continental currency adversely affected soldiers, as well as most other classes of the population. At the end of the six months' service in 1780 Boardman got paid. "My wages when Rec'd would not pay the expense of food on My road to the North and back. One of my Company Mates gave $100 for 10 lb. Flax. 3 coppers would buy a Dollar." It must have been thoroughly demoralizing to exhaust one's pay for six months merely in buying a few meals en route home!

Throughout the War the Militia remained in a state of readiness for British attack. No serious invasion of the State ever occurred, but several sharp raids were made on such places as Danbury, New Haven, and New London. Middletown men seem to have answered the alarm sounded at General Tryon's incursion against New Haven in July 1779. No less than fourteen companies of Colonel Comfort Sage's Twenty-Third Regiment of the Militia turned out to help repel the British attack.[96] Since men from the towns of Middletown and Chatham composed the complement of this regiment, we may assume that large numbers of local men participated.

One other catagory of soldiers, the so-called "State Troops", deserves brief attention. These were special groups, eventually numbering eighteen regiments in all, which were used chiefly to plug gaps in the Continental Line, or to carry out special missions.[97] They operated independently of the Militia, but had many of the same officers. Comfort Sage, for example, was on the staff of Colonel James Wadsworth's regiment which served in the Boston area early in the War. Major John Sumner as a staff officer went with Colonel Samuel Mott's battalion to reinforce Continental troops in the Ft. Ticonderoga area in the summer and fall of 1776. In the same period Colonel Sage commanded the Third Battalion in the New York area.[98]

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95. Journal of Oliver Boardman (MS. at Connecticut Historical Society).
96. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, p. 547.
97. *Connecticut as Colony and State,* II, 82-83.
98. *Rec. Conn. Rev.*, pp. 389, 398. Colonel Sage led the Third Battalion of Wadsworth's Brigade to New York for service there from June 1776 to December. Some losses were suffered in the retreat from the City. They were engaged in the Battle of White Plains. The seventh company, incidentally, was under Captain Edward Eells of Middletown.

Space limitations preclude any detailed account of individual or group participation in particular battles, but two episodes deserve special mention. Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs commanded one of the most dashing and daring actions of the War, that against Sag Harbor, Long Island, in May 1777. From Sachem's Head he took four hundred men in whaleboats across the Sound. The American forces completely surprised the heavily armed British, destroyed twelve ships, killed six, captured ninety, and seized large quantities of provisions held for the British Army in New York. Within twenty-four hours the entire expedition was completed without loss of a single American. The exploit greatly impressed Congress, and led that body to present Colonel Meigs with a sword and a memorial.[99]

Colonel Meigs played a leading role in the midnight assault, July 15-16, 1779, against Stony Point on the Hudson. Under "Mad Anthony" Wayne he led a hand-picked Connecticut light infantry regiment of 400 men. By his audacious handling of the troops Meigs won fresh laurels. Again the element of surprise greatly facilitated the American success.[100]

Although there existed no real "draft" in the modern sense, a large number of Middletown men saw service in the Continental Line, the State Troops, or Militia, or some combination of the two or three.[101] In most of the significant campaigns of the War, except those in the South, some Middletown men served. The Lexington Alarm, Boston seige, New York campaign, Quebec and Ticonderoga, and many other areas saw Middletown men in action. It is not certain exactly how many men served altogether[102] as the records are very incomplete and vague on important points. There is no question, however, that the total military contribution of Middletown in terms of personal service and provision of supplies was large.

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99. Middlebrook, *op. cit.,* I, 212.

100. *Rec. Conn. Rev.,* p. 241. John Fiske, *The American Revolution* (Boston, 1891), II, 112.

101. For the record of Middletown service see *Rec. Conn. Rev.,* and *Rolls and Lists of Connecticut Men in the Revolution,* in *Collections* of Connecticut Historical Society, Vols. VIII and IX. The latter supplements the former. Interesting information is found, for example, in *Collections,* VIII, 55-69, 80-82, 89, 107, 204.

102. The local enumeration of September 1, 1776, listed 588 men on the militia rolls, 104 able-bodied men, ages 16 to 45, not on the rolls; 202 men in Continental Army; and 5 men "raised for defence of the Colony and now in the Colony". At that time the town had in the category of males 20 to 70 years of age, 679 married and 268 single. *Middlesex County,* p. 73.

POPULATION

How many people lived in Revolutionary Middletown? Fortunately a Connecticut census was taken in 1774, and another in 1782, so that a fairly accurate answer is possible. In 1774 the census gave Middletown 4878 persons or a rank of tenth among the towns of the Colony. Since Hartford then had only 5031 people, and New London 5888, it is apparent that Middletown ranked near the top.[103] In the previous census, that of 1756, Middletown had led all the towns in population.[104]

During the Revolutionary years Middletown lost slightly — to be exact, a drop from 4878 to 4612 in 1782, or a six per cent decrease. This loss was not an atypical phenomenon in Connecticut as no less than ten of the twelve most populous towns of 1774 reported losses in the census eight years later.[105]

Why the decline in Middletown's population? It is difficult to say with any degree of accuracy. War very often has operated as a definite check upon population. It is known, furthermore, that a moderate emigration occurred during the war, especially after 1780, a continuation of an earlier trend. It is probable that some of the emigrants were from Middletown. During the war, immigration from Europe practically ceased.[106] A few of Middletown's young able-bodied men were killed, died of disease, or were seriously disabled in their military service. Some combination of these factors perhaps helps to explain the decline in population.

A small but significant part of Middletown's populace which deserves attention is the Negro element. In 1774 there were 198

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103. *C. R.*, XIV, 485, 487.

104. *Ibid.*, XIV, 492. That was a larger Middletown both in size and population (5664). Part of Middletown was cut off in 1767 to form the new town of Chatham. This explains the *apparent* decline between 1756 and 1774. The 1756 area of Middletown actually had a population of 7275 in 1774, a healthy 67 per cent gain.

105. *Ibid.*, XIV, 485-491. A. R. W., X, 124-125 New London dropped from 5888 to 5682, for example. *Middlesex County*, p. 73, cites an enumeration in Middletown on September 1, 1776, which gave a total of 5037 (4836 whites and 201 negroes). There is no certain way of checking the validity of these figures. If accurate, these figures indicate growth in the 1774-1776 period, and point to the all-war period of 1776-1782 for the entire decline. The town meeting voted on April 14, 1777, to take an "Exact Account of all Male Persons of the Age of Sixteen Years or upwards" except those already in military service. Town Votes, II, 353. The author has been unable to locate any additional information concerning this census, if it ever was taken.

106. Jedidiah Morse, *The American Geography* (London, 1792), p. 218.

Negroes reported as residents of the town, four per cent of the total population. Only five towns reported a larger total of Negroes.[107] Joseph Stocking seems to have been one of the largest slaveholders in the town and in Connecticut.[108] In the Town Records one finds occasional references to manumission of slaves. Dr. Eliot Rawson, for example, rewarded five of his Negroes for services to the Patriot cause by declaring on June 26, 1780, that one slave should become free in six months, and the other four at twenty-four years of age.[109]

The Middletown of Revolutionary days was larger in area than the Middletown of 1950, but it had roughly only about one-fifth as many people. By eighteenth-century standards, in the prevailing agricultural economy, however, it was considered to be heavily settled.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

By eighteenth-century standards the health of Middletown appears to have been good. No serious epidemics, for example, struck the town during the war period. At that time there were three well-known and highly-respected physicians in active practice; namely, John Osborne, Eliot Rawson, and John Dickinson.

Dr. Osborne, whose father had served the town for many years, was considered an eminent practicioner and a person of vigorous opinions.[110] When the War broke out, he was in the twelfth year of a local career which was to last sixty-two years. He ardently upheld the British Crown so that he did not contribute his services to any Patriot political endeavors. Dr. Osborne possessed one of the best medical libraries of the period and instructed more than a few young men in medical science.[111] Dr. Rawson also served successfully for many years.

Dr. John Dickinson likewise enjoyed the favorable opinion and patronage of the townspeople. During the Revolution he mixed politics with prescriptions, apparently with good results! Frequently Middletown sent him as a representative to the General Assembly, and politics tended to encroach steadily upon his medical practice.[112]

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107. *C.R.*, XIV, 485-491.
108. Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776,* pp. 350 ff.
109. Town Votes, II, 391.
110. *Middlesex County,* p. 20
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*

One of the most serious medical problems of the times was smallpox. Dr. Osborne labored long and hard to overcome the deep local prejudice against inoculation for smallpox. The following excerpt from the Town Records suggests the persuasiveness of his argument:

> (March 9, 1778) This Town having at their Lawfull Town Meeting held on the 29th Day of Dec[embe]r A D 1777 Given Liberty to Ennoculate for the Small Pox Such Persons as should prcure a Permit from the Maj[o]r Part of the Civil Authority and Selectmen of S[ai]d Town therefor which Liberty has been Improved & about 1200 Persons have been Ennoculated & now the Season of the Year is Coming on when it will be necessary that all Hands should be Employed Either in the Field or War or Husbandry or in Trade or Manufactures. It is now Voted and ordered that no more Permits be Granted. . . . And all Informing officers and other Persons are hereby Desired to be Vigilant & make presentment of all Breaches of the Late Law relating to the Small Pox.[113]

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The religious phases of Middletown's life in the Revolutionary era centered about the three churches — the First Church (Congregational), the Strict Congregational, and the Episcopal Church. Each church seems to have been under the charge of an energetic clergyman of patriotic outlook. In the war years no serious denominational rivalries marred the scene, perhaps in part because the War itself resulted in the submergence of most petty differences.[114]

Since the First Church was the oldest local religious body, the representative of the Established Church, and commonly considered one of the most influential churches in Connecticut, it deserves attention. The church edifice was located on High Street nearly opposite the head of Church Street. The Reverend Enoch Huntington, brother of Samuel Huntington the Signer of the Declaration of Independence, assumed the pulpit of the First Church in 1762, three years after graduation from Yale. His coming coincided almost exactly with the assumption of more rigorous policies by the Mother Country toward the American Colonies. He seems to have been opposed heartily to the new policies and did much to mold opinion in the

113. Town Votes, II, 361.

114. The Strict Congregational Church arose in 1747 as a result of differences in outlook stimulated by the Great Awakening. The Strict or Separatist Church basically was an off-shoot from the First Church. No evidence exists in the records of the churches that any serious denominational dispute arose.

period of mounting opposition to and break from British rule.[115]

The attitude of Huntington comes out clearly in the sermon he preached on July 20, 1775, for the general day of fasting ordered by the Continental Congress and observed throughout Connecticut. Some excerpts follow:

> We see, for a course of years, a long series of plans and schemes of subtle statesmen, and parliamentary debates, and acts, and resolutions, under ministerial influence, all evidently calculated to subjugate this country.[116]

He went on to ask whether whole fleets and armies were not used "to convert us as a people, to a state of the most abject slavery to the crown, court-parasites, minions and placemen of Great Britain?" But Americans asked only the peaceful enjoyment of the rights and privileges accorded by former British rulers and parliaments. Huntington closed on this note:

> And Oh! that we might be enabled, like God's antient people, under the conduct of the good *Nehemiah,* to keep this *Fast* and like them obtain favour of God.[117]

His denunciation of the British leadership easily ranked in vehemence with that of the more rabid Patriot political leaders of Connecticut.

It is of interest to note that the roster of deacons of the First Church included several of the best-known political figures of Middletown. The deacons were Jonathan Allen, Joseph Clarke (to 1788), Jabez Hamlin, John Earl Hubbard (to 1782), Jacob Whitmore (elected in 1782), and Chauncey Whittlesey (elected 1778).[118]

The Strict Congregational Church (now South Congregational Church) also seems to have been thriving during the early war years under the able leadership of the Rev. Ebenezer Frothingham. Although the religious fervor which had marked its inception in the excitement of the Great Awakening had quieted down, the

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115. Azel W. Hazen, *Brief History of the First Church of Christ in Middletown,* pp. 33-54.

116. Enoch Huntington, *A Sermon Delivered at Middletown July 20th, A. D. 1775* (Hartford, Ebenezer Watson), pp. 17-18.

117. *Ibid.,* pp. 19, 21, 22, 25.

118. Field, *Statistical Account,* p. 159. At the church meeting on Dec. 8, 1778, Titus Hosmer served as moderator. Matthew Talcott, Nehemiah Hubbard and Jacob Wetmore were chosen a committee to manage the "Prudentiall Affairs" of the society for the following year. First Congregational Church Records, 1702-1864, Ser. II, Vol. III, p. 40.

congregation apparently was fairly large and active.[119] The new church, located on the south side of South Main Street between Mill Street and Pameacha Pond was a structure of fifty-six feet in length, and forty-six in breadth.[120]

The picture of organized religion in Revolutionary Middletown was rounded out by the Episcopal Church, organized two-hundred years ago. Among the prominent citizens who led the drive for the erection of the first church edifice, concluded in 1755 at the South End of Main Street, were Richard Alsop, William Johnson, Philip Mortimer, and Captain Caleb Wetmore.[121] In the Revolutionary years the Reverend Abraham Jarvis, who had assumed his duties in July 1764, was rector of Holy Trinity Church. Wardens at different times included Philip Mortimer, Ichabod Wetmore, Richard Alsop, Nathaniel Shaler, and John Osborn.

As to the state of morals in the war-time town, it is exceedingly difficult to make any specific observations. The Reverend David D. Field, in his very valuable early nineteenth-century study of Middlesex County declared: "The revolutionary war . . . gave a shock to the moral habits of the people, from which they have not yet wholly recovered. From that time to the present an unusual number have indulged in Sabbath-breaking, profaneness, and intemperance."[122] Other reliable testimony as to religious conditions in the town is unfortunately lacking. Church records themselves bear almost no reference to the War, or to any special results of it.[123] The clergy and members of the three churches, by all reports, seem to have been ardently patriotic and united in the war effort.

THE DAWN OF PEACE

The definitive Peace of Paris of 1783 brought peace to the infant United States and joy to the hearts of Middletown's populace.

119. At least it was able to erect a new church in 1774 and pay Mr. Frothingham a $450 yearly salary, considered excellent in those days. See Charles Hill, *Historical Sketch of the South Congregational Church* (Middletown, 1876), for background facts.
120. Field, *op. cit.*, p. 150. *One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Organization of the South Congregational Church*, p. 27.
121. *Historical Sketch of the Parish of the Church of the Holy Trinity* (Middletown, 1837), pp. 9, 11, 31. Church of the Holy Trinity, Middletown, Connecticut, Records, 1750-1937, Vol. II. (MS. at State Library). The Holy Trinity records indicate serious opposition to the Episcopal Church by many townspeople, especially in the early years of Jarvis' efforts. *Ibid.*, p. 7. Apparently this opposition largely disappeared by Revolutionary days.
122. Field, *Statistical Account*, p. 33.
123. Church of the Holy Trinity, Records 1750-1937. First Congregational Church, Records 1702-1864, Sec. II, Vol. III. Also Records, 1668-1871.

To the inhabitants of the small agricultural and commercial village it was a pleasure to forget the grim days of war and look forward to a happier future.

The War had brought many dislocations to individuals and to the town as a whole. There had been a small mercantile boom chiefly stimulated by the supply business for the Continental troops, but many failed to share in the prosperity — least of all did the underpaid soldiers and their dependents. Acute problems of spiralling prices, depreciating paper money, and severe shortages of certain necessities, such as salt, plagued the townspeople for most of the eight years. Stark tragedy came to a few in the loss of loved ones from wounds or disease incurred in military service. As always the impact of the war upon individuals was cruelly uneven.

Undoubtedly Middletown's greatest claim to fame in the struggle lay in the high caliber of its civilian leadership in which Jabez Hamlin and Titus Hosmer led the procession. By and large Middletown was deeply affected by the Revolution, but the town managed to "weather the storm" successfully. It came out of the War in a very favorable position to capitalize upon the expanding commercial and industrial opportunities of the next several decades.

The Rockfall Corporation was organized and endowed on January of 1935 by the late Colonel Clarence S. Wadsworth for eleemosynary purposes, but it was not until 1941 that it took an active part in community life when the de Koven House was restored and beautified by Mrs. Wadsworth as a Community Center in memory of her husband.

The deKoven House was constructed about 1792 by Benjamin Williams and shortly thereafter purchased by Henry deKoven, the great-grandfather of the founder of the Corporation. Now this historic landmark has taken on new life to become a unique and useful center for the whole Middletown area.

Officers and Directors of The Rockfall Corporation

Thomas M. Russell, Jr.	*President*
Everett V. Dana	*Vice President*
Mrs. W. Ernest Harrington	*Secretary*
Henry H. Lyman	*Treasurer*
Robert I. Laggren	*Director*
Elmer E. Schattschneider	*Director*
Seymour Wadsworth	*Director*

The Middlesex County Historical Society came into being by an act of the General Assembly in April, 1901. This act authorized that the first annual meeting should be held at such time and place as designated by the following men:

Reverend A. W. Hazen
Albert R. Crittenden
George A. Craig

The first home of the Society was the old Henry G. Hubbard mansion which stood at the corner of Union and Crescent Streets at the site now occupied by the Y. M. C. A.

On April 18, 1927, the Society purchased from the North Congregational Church, the property which it now occupies on Court Street. There it houses a unique and valuable collection of antiques pertaining to this entire area. Its object is to maintain safe housing for the historical documents and objects already held, and to receive from time to time additional material and to make these available for inspection and study by the public.

Officers of The Middlesex County Historical Society

Ansel A. Packard	*President*
George M. Dutcher	*Vice President*
Thomas M. Russell, Jr.	*Vice President*
Lester D. Fowler	*Secretary*
Mrs. Henry Bacon	*Assistant Secretary*
Howard E. Murkett	*Treasurer*

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